

Patrick J. Leahy, Chris Van Hollen, Angus S. King, Jr., Tim Kaine, Richard J. Durbin, Gary C. Peters, Tina Smith, Jack Reed, Martin Heinrich, Benjamin L. Cardin, Richard Blumenthal.

Mr. SCHUMER. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on nominations, in a few moments, we are going to begin confirming a slew of nominees to serve in the Biden administration that, up until now, have been needlessly obstructed by a handful—just a handful—of Senate Republicans. But under the rules, they can do that.

Confirming these nominees is one of the most basic constitutional responsibilities of the U.S. Senate. It is bigger than the interests of any one Senator. It is about ensuring our government is able to effectively serve the American people here at home and advance the American interests overseas.

For decades, both sides—both sides—have understood that each President, regardless of party, deserves to have their administration filled, and we have worked together to make that happen, particularly for noncontroversial and less senior nominees. But today's blockade is a beast of a different nature.

Right now, over 150—150—of President Biden's nominees are stalled by a handful of Republican Senators who have hijacked the rules of the Senate for no other reason than obstruction for its own sake. Many received bipartisan support in committee.

These aren't low-priority nominees—whatever that means. Many of these men and women would deal with matters of diplomacy and national security. That is what Republicans are blocking. Some of them would help implement the bipartisan infrastructure bill. That is what Republicans are blocking.

From fighting inflation to relieving supply chains, to advancing U.S. national security, many of the men and women who are nominated would be the ones who would actually do this work. Let me repeat that. For all the howling and hollering we hear from Republicans about inflation, national security, and economic recovery, they are blocking the very same people whose jobs it would be to tackle these issues. It is "Alice in Wonderland" logic.

There are no justifications for their delay—none. Listening to the other side twist themselves into pretzels, it is clear that their game is simple, cynical, self-interested obstruction. And I thank my colleagues on this side of the aisle for coming to the floor day after day to shine a spotlight on the real-world impact of Republicans' obstruction.

This is the consequence of Republican obstruction. We are going to keep voting in this Chamber as we work to get these nominees confirmed.

BUILD BACK BETTER ACT

Mr. President, now on Build Back Better, Senate Democrats are working to pass Build Back Better and send it to the President's desk as soon as possible so we can strengthen the middle class, create opportunity in the 21st century, and fight the climate crisis.

Yesterday, I had a good discussion with the President and the Speaker, where we talked about ongoing negotiations on finalizing the Build Back Better Act so we can pass it through the Senate. The President requested more time to continue his negotiations, and so we will keep working with him, hand in hand, to bring this bill over the finish line and deliver on these must needed provisions.

At its core, Build Back Better is about making the greatest investment in the American people that we have seen in generations. It is about building new ladders to help people climb into the middle class and providing them stability to thrive in the middle class once they get there. That means lowering the costs of prescription drugs, extending the child tax credit, making childcare more affordable for tens of millions of families, expanding housing, early education, and affordable healthcare. And it means taking unprecedented steps to fight climate change and lay the groundwork for greater action in the future.

These are all things that the American people want. These are things Democrats are fighting to secure.

And it cannot be forgotten that not a single Republican—not one—has joined us in making them happen. They are opposed to making childcare more affordable; they are opposed to fighting the climate crisis; and they are possibly even considering fighting provisions like making drugs like insulin more affordable.

If Republicans won't fight to help everyday Americans afford the basics, Democrats will. We are going to keep working to achieve our goal of passing Build Back Better into law.

VOTING RIGHTS

Mr. President, on voting rights, the fight to protect voting rights and restore the U.S. Senate is moving forward.

Yesterday, I continued to have detailed discussions with many of my colleagues about how we are going to reach our goal of passing voting rights to ensure it takes effect before Americans return to the polls in the next election, so it can affect those 2022 elections which Republican legislators are so jaundicing.

Last night, a number of my colleagues and I met with Marty Paone, a Senate rules expert who worked under several previous majority leaders, including Robert C. Byrd, about how we can restore the Senate so it can work the way our Founders intended, the way it has functioned for generations before the Republican gridlock of the past decade or so.

Just now, I came from a meeting where both Marty Paone and Marty Gold—one a Democrat and one a Republican—counseled discussing how we can move forward on these issues, making the Senate work and getting voting rights done.

Later today, Marty will join the Senate Democrats at our caucus meeting to continue this very important conversation—Marty Paone will.

We have tried all year long to get Republicans to join us on a bipartisan effort to protect our democracy, but they have resisted, and they have blocked the Senate from having so much as a debate on this issue—a debate, not even a debate. Four votes, on three of them, every Republican voted not even to go forward in debating them—on the fourth vote, only one. Of course, under the rules of the Senate, as they are presently constituted, you need 10.

Voting rights should not be a partisan issue. Both parties are better off if our democracy is strong and safeguarded against the Republican assaults playing out at the State level.

The voting restrictions we are seeing passed in Republican-dominated State legislatures are the most egregious assaults on voting rights since the days of Jim Crow, and they are being passed entirely on a party-line basis—zero bipartisanship from these State legislator Republicans.

Here in the Senate, we are going to keep at it because just because Republicans will not join us, does not mean Democrats will stop fighting on this issue. It is too important, and the fight continues.

I yield the floor.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 528, Atul Atmaram Gawande, of Massachusetts, to be an Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Brian Schatz, Martin Heinrich, Alex Padilla, Jacky Rosen, Margaret Wood Hassan, Dianne Feinstein, Benjamin L. Cardin, Richard Blumenthal, Angus S. King, Jr., Jon Ossoff, Bernard Sanders, Christopher Murphy, Sheldon Whitehouse, Sherrod Brown, Christopher A. Coons.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination

of Atul Atmaram Gawande, of Massachusetts, to be an Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. OSSOFF), the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS), and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES), the Senator from Iowa (Ms. ERNST), the Senator from Nebraska (Mrs. FISCHER), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL), the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), and the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SHELBY).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 49, nays 31, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 506 Ex.]

YEAS—49

Baldwin	Heinrich	Reed
Barraso	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Bennet	Hirono	Schatz
Blumenthal	Kaine	Schumer
Booker	Kelly	Shaheen
Brown	King	Sinema
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Smith
Cardin	Leahy	Stabenow
Carper	Lujan	Tester
Casey	Manchin	Van Hollen
Collins	Markey	Warner
Coons	Menendez	Warnock
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warren
Duckworth	Murkowski	Whitehouse
Durbin	Murphy	Wyden
Gillibrand	Murray	
Hassan	Padilla	

NAYS—31

Blackburn	Hagerty	Scott (FL)
Blunt	Hawley	Scott (SC)
Boozman	Hoeben	Sullivan
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Thune
Capito	Kennedy	Tillis
Cassidy	Lankford	Toomey
Cornyn	Lee	Tuberville
Crapo	Marshall	Wicker
Cruz	Romney	Young
Graham	Rubio	
Grassley	Sasse	

NOT VOTING—20

Burr	Inhofe	Peters
Cotton	Johnson	Portman
Cramer	Lummis	Risch
Daines	McConnell	Rounds
Ernst	Moran	Sanders
Feinstein	Ossoff	Shelby
Fischer	Paul	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 49, the nays are 31.

The motion is agreed to.

The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise to express my support for a num-

ber of foreign affairs nominations that should receive not just cloture votes today but should receive votes on their nomination.

It is a long list, including Dr. Atul Gawande to be the Assistant Administrator for the Bureau of Global Health at the U.S. Agency for International Development; Mark Gitenstein to be the U.S. Ambassador to the European Union; Julissa Reynoso Pantaleon to be the Ambassador to Spain; Rahm Emanuel to be the Ambassador to Japan; Governor Jack Markell to be the U.S. Representative to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development; Marcela Escobari to be Assistant Administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean at USAID; and Marc Knapper to be the Ambassador to Vietnam.

Just think about it. Think about these assignments and what they mean to the United States. These are quality nominees, people who will represent the United States at home and abroad with skill and dignity.

I appreciate that the majority leader has made it a priority to confirm them prior to the end of the session, and I encourage all of my colleagues to support their nominations. But let's face it—there is little to celebrate when it comes to nominations in the Senate. The truth is that some Republicans' unprecedented obstructionism is straining the system to the breaking point, leaving the President without a team on national security positions that are critical to the national security and interest of the United States and the American people, leaving our Nation weakened—weakened. I will talk a little bit about that as it relates to these nominees.

I am thrilled that we are voting today on the nomination of Dr. Atul Gawande. His medical background and track record in public health are impressive, and he is clearly superbly qualified for the role of Assistant Administrator for the Bureau of Global Health at USAID. But it should not take this long. Dr. Gawande was nominated 5 months ago.

We are in the middle of a pandemic, a global pandemic, and he will be key to helping us fight COVID internationally. Do you think that our Republican colleagues would think it is urgent to get someone in a position that can help us to deal with the global COVID challenge? Republicans should have been pressuring us to move his nomination at lightning speed instead of slowing it at every turn.

Similarly, I am pleased to support Ambassador Gitenstein to be our point person in Brussels. He has a long and distinguished career in both the public and private sectors, including previously as U.S. Ambassador to Romania, and is deeply committed to strengthening transatlantic ties.

He should have been in Brussels weeks ago, as the President is working tirelessly to ensure a strong and uni-

fied European reaction if Russia dares to invade Ukraine. He has to do so without an Ambassador to the European Union. We want the European Union to be on our side and join with us in multilateral efforts to give Russia the consequences of any action militarily against Ukraine, but, you know, you need to have someone at the EU making the case.

Marcela Escobari—her experience and knowledge are deeply needed at USAID, where she would be leading our efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean, regions that are facing immense challenges, from Haiti to Venezuela to the Northern Triangle. She was confirmed by voice vote for this very same position in 2016. Yet, this time around, her nomination has languished due to Republican holds.

Now, we are worried about immigration, right, undocumented immigration coming to the country? Well, if you don't have somebody to help create stability in Haiti, guess what. You are going to see a lot more people at that southern border. If we don't deal with the Northern Triangle, we are going to continue to have a challenge. If we don't deal with the humanitarian challenges of the dictatorship in Venezuela, we are going to continue to see a challenge there. Shouldn't we have the person in charge of dealing with these challenges so that we, in our national interest—forget about being a good neighbor—in our national interest, are protected?

Look at the other nominees. Look at the other nominees. Spain. Spain happens to be the head right now—one of the Spaniards happens to be the head of the EU's—basically their Secretary of State, their Foreign Minister. Wouldn't it be great to have an American Ambassador in Spain pressing both the Spanish and that Foreign Minister on the questions of Ukraine, on the questions of Venezuela, on the questions of Cuba? And I could go on and on. But we have nobody in Spain. Spain hasn't been the most forward-leading, as we would like to see them, even though they are involved heavily in our hemisphere, but we have no one in Spain to make the case.

How about Japan? As we are trying to meet the challenge of China in that part of the world, we have no one in Japan to help galvanize the challenges that we want to meet as it relates to China—no one. We have a new Prime Minister in Japan. It would be great to have somebody on the ground already engaging with the Japanese in coordination with the QUAD as we deal with the challenges of China. I hear a lot of talk here about China, but here we are, when we could do something about it, and we have nothing.

Marc Knapper to be the Ambassador to Vietnam—a country that is feeling the pressures and coercion of China economically and otherwise. Wouldn't it be great to have a U.S. Ambassador there to help proselytize Vietnam into our orbit as they meet the challenges of China in the days ahead?

So, supposedly, these people are being held up in pursuit of some national security initiative. Yet we are putting all these other national security initiatives at risk in order to deal with one person's vision of the world and what should be done. I don't understand that logic. I don't know how, supposedly to promote the national interests of the United States and its security, you then create a series of risks for the United States and its national security across the globe. That is what is happening. That is what is happening. It is pretty outrageous.

Now, I am in pain here, but these nominations have to get done. They have to get done. So if we are going to stay here, we are going to stay here, but these nominations have to get done. These people need to be in their positions so that we are not going to be in pain across the globe. Something is going to happen in one of these places, and we will not be there to ultimately have someone to promote our interests to protect ourselves.

Let me close by saying that I didn't come to the Senate to fight about nominations—certainly not what I did when I aspired to come to the Senate. I don't think most of our colleagues did as well. We came here to work for our constituents, to find solutions that move this country forward, to make a positive difference. We need to rededicate ourselves to making the Senate work, to fulfilling the constitutional duty of advice and consent. We are not fulfilling our constitutional duty of advice and consent in this manner.

Giving the President—I didn't agree with President Trump on a lot of his foreign policy decisions, but I voted for a lot of his nominees, and I didn't hold them up in any way, shape, or form, as we are seeing in this unprecedented fashion. He needs qualified people to help the Nation confront the challenges we face.

I urge my colleagues, let's move forward. Let's expeditiously get these nominees out. If you don't want to vote for them, don't vote for them. That is fine. But don't stop the process of the advice and consent that ultimately is needed to put these people in the positions that are critical to the national security of the United States.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

TRIBUTE TO ROLFE MCCOLLISTER

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I would like to take a few minutes to talk about two prominent Louisianans who are either transitioning or have transitioned into new ways to serve our State.

And I am not unbiased about these individuals, as you will shortly be able to tell. But I think most Louisianans who are fairminded will agree with what I am about to say.

The first person I want to talk about—and I have known both of these folks for a long time—is Rolfe McCollister.

Rolfe did own—he has sold a number of his companies. What did he do? Well, let me just say generally, first, Rolfe is a very astute and successful business person. He is one of the most prominent, if not the most prominent, publisher in Louisiana.

He started from scratch a periodical called the Baton Rouge Business Report, and from that, Rolfe expanded. I mean, the list of his publications is very impressive. He started with the Baton Rouge Business Report. He publishes 10/12 Industry Report, 225 Magazine, inRegister, Daily Report, 225 Dine, Best of 225 This Week.

He also started a very important tradition, which is looked forward to in my State, called the Business Awards and Hall of Fame.

He started the influential Women in Business, and he started the Top 40 Under 40 list, to recognize some of our younger citizens.

Rolfe is retiring effective at the first of the year, and despite all of Rolfe's success in the business world—he is also a banker and he does other things, all self-made. Aside from his success in the world of publishing and journalism, the most important thing Rolfe McCollister has is his passion.

Now, he is smart. He is very intelligent, a graduate of LSU, extraordinary character, very dependable. If you need something done, you go to Rolfe. Trustworthy. But it is his passion that has most impressed me about Rolfe McCollister.

I first met Rolfe in 1987. I knew of him, but I met him. Louisiana had elected a brand-new reform Governor, a former Congressman by the name of Governor Buddy Roemer.

Like many of our reform Governors, Buddy was to serve one term. And when Governor Roemer took over, gosh, the State was a mess. We had, I think it was, a \$7 or \$8 billion budget. We had a \$1.1 billion structural deficit. When Governor Roemer became Governor, we couldn't make payroll. Our schools were a mess. We had no charter schools in Louisiana. Our universities were floundering. And when you don't have adequate funding, universities tend to cannibalize each other. They were all competing for the dollars. It was like Lebanon; you didn't know which faction was going to be the winner today.

Our campaign finance in Louisiana was a mess. At that time, it was legal, and not out of the ordinary, for somebody to put \$200,000 cash in a suitcase and take it to a political candidate, and it was perfectly legal for that candidate to take it and perfectly legal for that donor to give it.

Governor Roemer set out to try to fix some of these problems, and by his side was Rolfe McCollister, not in a paid position.

I was working for Governor Roemer then as his lawyer. Rolfe just spent all his time helping, and we needed him, because Governor Roemer would listen to him, and Rolfe was there every step of the way.

And after Governor Roemer got beat, Rolfe didn't stop. He has never stopped. He has been a leader in the charter school movement in Louisiana for as long as I can remember. He believes that competition makes all of us better, and it will make our public schools better.

He did a stint on the LSU board of supervisors, which runs our flagship university, LSU. Rolfe didn't ever hold back. I mean, he said exactly what he thought about what was working at LSU and what wasn't working, and Rolfe made a lot of people mad.

But Rolfe always believed, as did Governor Roemer, and, frankly, as do I—I learned a lot from both of them—that if you make the right people mad, you are doing your job. And this was all because of his passion, because he cared so much about Louisiana, to make it better. He didn't make any money off of it; it cost him money. And I am sure his family said: Hey, Rolfe, you know, can you come home a little earlier tonight, you know?

But Rolfe is just a fine person, and I am very proud to have him in Louisiana. When I count my blessings, I count Rolfe twice, and he is transitioning to a new role. He sold his company to his partner, who is another great guy, Julio Melara. But Rolfe is going to still be involved in my State, and I just want to thank him.

TRIBUTE TO MELINDA DESLATTE

Mr. President, the second person I want to mention briefly—totally different in terms of the way she contributes to our State—her name is Melinda Deslatte.

Melinda is the new—I want to get her title right—research director, which is the No. 2 position at the Public Affairs Research Council.

The Public Affairs Research Council is a big deal in Louisiana. I think it is our oldest think tank. It is one of the premier think tanks. They are not Republicans; they are not Democrats. I don't know what they are, except smart and straightforward.

They periodically publish white papers, exhaustively researched, about issues like the environment, fiscal policy, education. Every year when we amend our constitution—and, unfortunately, we amend our State constitution just about every year—PAR puts out a publication explaining—not advocating for or against, but explaining—the amendments. I read their white papers and their writings like clockwork.

The No. 2 position there is research director. So it is important. Melinda Deslatte is the new research director. I think Melinda has taken over the Public Affairs Research Council, and I am bittersweet about it. I am very happy for PAR because they got one of our best and our brightest, but I am really sad for journalism.

Melinda ran the Associated Press in Baton Rouge for 22 years—22 years. And, for me, the three things that you have to have to be a respected journalist are, first, you have got to have

brains. Melinda has brains aplenty. I am not saying she is the smartest person I have ever met, but to paraphrase Coach Bum Phillips, the list she is on, it doesn't take long to call the roll.

You have got to be willing to work very hard to be a successful journalist, and, boy, Melinda has a work ethic. But you have also got to be fair, and Melinda Deslatte was—she is now at PAR—the fairest journalist I have ever dealt with.

I don't know what her politics are. I never asked her. I don't even know if she is in a party. And I have been on the long end and the short end of some of her pieces.

She was unspinnable. By that, I mean it is not that she wouldn't listen. You could call Melinda. She was a great listener. You could sit there and talk to her and give her your speech for 20 minutes, 30 minutes, and if she wasn't on deadline, she would listen to you. But I always got the impression it didn't do any good because she was so smart and so hard-working and so dedicated to her profession that she was just going to call it like she saw it, and she did. She did.

She was not an agenda journalist. She was a real journalist. And I know, you know, that Melinda is probably not going to like me saying this. Melinda is the kind of journalist that if a politician praised her, you know, it is like: I must be doing something wrong here. You know, you don't want too much praise from politicians.

But she has left her job. So I feel like I can do it. And she has gone on to another way of helping our State.

I wish all of our journalists were Melinda Deslatte. I wish all of them were Melinda Deslatte.

But, anyway, thank you, Rolfe. Thank you, Melinda. Thank you both for giving so much to Louisiana.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DEMOCRATIC LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I am looking around this Chamber, and I am talking to my colleagues, and it is so apparent; we should not be here right now. Our business should be done. We have had all year.

We should have wished one another well last week, and then we should have gotten ourselves home to our families, to our church families, to our neighbors and friends. And right now, I should be in Tennessee wishing Tennesseans well for this Christmas season.

But with the way things are going, I am beginning to believe that Joe Biden and the Democrats do not wish the American people well because the fact

is, everything they have done this year, in some way, shape, or form, has made life harder for Americans and for Tennesseans, and it has taken away just a little bit more of their freedom.

I was talking with a Tennessean last night, and they were making this point to me about the gains that they had seen during Republican control of the House and the Senate and the Trump administration and being able to keep more of their money in their pocket. This was a veteran who talked about our standing in the world. Our allies knew they could trust us. Our enemies, indeed, feared us. All of that is gone. Life is harder; life is more uncertain; it is less predictable; inflation is through the roof.

As Tennesseans have turned on the news this week, they have heard an avalanche of news reports holding one or two Members of this body responsible for “obstructing the democratic process”—something that sounds pretty scary when it is taken out of context, doesn't it?

In my opinion, I consider it media malpractice to blame one or two Members of this Chamber for a year's worth of bad-faith delays because Members have asked for a vote on certain national security issues, and the Senate should have weighed in on these issues long ago. The Senate has had the time. The leadership has had the time. So, no, that narrative cannot stand.

All these delays and all this strife is the natural conclusion of the Democrats' single-minded obsession with their reckless tax-and-spending spree.

My colleagues on the left have, indeed, squandered months trying to strong-arm their moderate colleagues into rubberstamping what I call their “Build Back Broke” agenda. It is so toxic that even economists who many times are friendly with the White House have turned their backs on the proposal. Even they deem it socialist in nature.

This month, we have reaped the consequences of their obsession in the form of 6.8 percent inflation. It is already at a 40-year high. It is still ticking up. Gas prices are increasing. Food is costing more. Warehouses are being cleared out. One hundred and seventy cargo ships are still off the coast of California, 150 miles out.

But yet, until a few hours ago, really, the Democrats were pushing for final passage on a spending bill that would make things even worse—would make it worse. It is not \$1.75 trillion; it is \$5 trillion. It is not paid for. It is not, “Oh, it doesn't cost a dime”; it costs \$3 trillion. That is the conservative estimate.

If you look back through the record, you will find almost no help for our supply chains that I mentioned that are all backed up, and you will find at least one terrible mistake that made the bad situation worse.

Joe Biden's vaccine mandates started inflicting damage on the economy and our supply chains well before the

courts started throwing up their roadblocks, and thank goodness the courts are backing where the American people are on this mandate issue.

In Tennessee, these foolish mandates could cost businesses more than \$70 million and force 37 percent of our labor force out of work.

My Democratic colleagues, however, have wasted hours here on the Senate floor defending what is truly a blatant power grab. Does it make the lives of Tennesseans and Americans better? Absolutely not. It makes them worse.

They have somehow neglected to acknowledge that these mandates don't reach as far as our southern border. Isn't it amazing? In fact, most of the policies they are so eager to force on the American people that are making their lives worse evaporate once you hit the border, which is even more chaotic now than it was on day 1 of the Biden administration.

If you look back on the past year, you will find little in the way of assistance for our Border Patrol agents and other law enforcement officers. Oh, no, can't do that. Oh, no, let's reinvent the police. Let's reinvent law enforcement. Oh, no, we can't put more assets on the southern border to defend our sovereignty. It makes you believe that the Democratic Party is pleased with the chaos that they are seeing in border communities all across that southern border.

What my friends across the aisle have done is basically to hand power, control, and billions of dollars to those cartels. And they have opened up their arms, and they have welcomed now right at 2 million people to illegally enter this country. No vaccine mandates apply to them. Oh, no, sir, not at all—preference. Let's go ahead. They can go through a separate TSA line when they get on a plane with a taxpayer-funded plane ticket. And all the time, the lives of Americans under this administration, they are not as well off as they were a year ago. Their life is not as comfortable as it was a year ago.

Now, if security was even an inkling of a priority with my colleagues, if security had any importance at all, securing this Nation—you know, it is kind of one of the first things we are supposed to do, provide for the common defense. But this week, we finally got around to passing the NDAA. How about that? Finally got it done.

Now, we wouldn't have had to wait until this week to take the threat of what I call the “axis of evil” seriously—the threats coming from Russia, China, Iran, North Korea. I can assure you, they are watching us very closely, and they are keeping up with what we are doing to protect this Nation.

Why are they so aggressive right now? They are looking at Joe Biden, and they are saying, He is weak, he is not going to do anything to push back on us. You know, he talked about a few economic sanctions with Russia, but Putin is not worried about that. How

about sanctioning, stopping trade, sanctioning so many other areas, stopping the Nord Stream 2—how about that—to show that we are going to deal with them as they, an adversary of ours, deserve to be dealt with?

We don't do any of that. Oh, no, let's not make Xi Jinping mad. Let's not do anything like that. Let's not call him into account. Let's let him keep carrying out that genocide on the Uighurs. Oh, and you know, let's do this; let's just have a diplomatic boycott of the Olympics. But go ahead and let our corporations, let our TV networks and their cameras broadcast to the world the glory of Beijing and Xi Jinping.

Inconsistencies and weakness do not serve us well. They do not. And instead of looking at things that should be a priority, my colleagues across the aisle have kept their focus on trying to pass a gigantic spending bill that the American people do not want and programs they say we don't need.

But the Democrats are saying that we are going to pass it by whatever means necessary—whatever means necessary. We are going to get this done. Thank goodness, we are leaving here, and it is not done.

Now, woven into this exercise in partisan brinksmanship was an ongoing effort to punch holes in the very institutions that keep our government from collapsing into chaos. We have watched our Democratic colleagues fail to gain traction with policies that people haven't asked for and, as I said, don't want. But instead of setting their power grabs and wish list aside, the Democrats tried to find ways to crash through constitutional and institutional backstops and force their will on the American people.

You hear it all the time: Time is running out. We are going to lose the House; we are going to lose the Senate so we have got to do this. We have got to transform the country.

Well, they have gone round after round with the Supreme Court and the Federal court packers, the anti-filibuster crowd, and those who wish to attack the integrity of the ballot box. They don't want to make it easier to vote and harder to cheat; they are trying to make it easier to cheat and harder to vote. And, repeatedly, they continue to try to look for somebody who blame. It has got to be somebody else's fault.

Just yesterday, we saw a wave of righteous indignation over the Senate Parliamentarian's refusal to allow the Democrats to shove amnesty for illegal immigrants into a budget bill. That is right.

They should not have been surprised by the ruling. They tried it once, twice, three times, and every time, they should have known how this was going to end. You can't do that.

It is almost as if all this has nothing to do with the policies printed on the thousands upon thousands of pages the Democrats are hoping nobody reads—because they feel like they have got a

deadline, they have got to do this, time is running out. By whatever means necessary, let's just get it done.

Well, there is no serious person—none—who could look at this past year and conclude that Joe Biden and his allies in Congress have been acting in good faith, doing things the people want to see done, because their agenda has been the opposite of that.

That is why so many elected representatives in the House and the Senate are saying: Hey, I am going home, and I am talking to people. We are getting calls in our office. We are getting emails. People are speaking up. They don't like this. The more they know about what we are doing, the less they like it.

There is no serious person who could look at these underhanded attacks on our institution and conclude that the Democrats believe more in the common cause of freedom than they do in passing their "Build Back Broke" agenda. They have got to have it. They have just got to have it.

And no serious person could look at the past year and dispute that it is Joe Biden and the Democrats who were the architects of their own destructive agenda. And the reason we are all still here at the eleventh hour waiting on the majority is because they have put their power before the people.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VAN HOLLEN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF SHALINA D. KUMAR

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I am so pleased today to rise to speak about two incredibly competent women who are going to be coming before us for votes for the Michigan Federal district bench a little bit later today.

First of all, I rise in support of the nomination of Judge Shalina Kumar to be the U.S. district court judge for the Eastern District of Michigan. During her nomination hearing, Judge Kumar spoke about her father, Dr. Krishna Kumar, who moved to the United States from India. Dr. Kumar taught all of his children to believe in themselves and that they could be anything if they put their minds to it, and that is just what Shalina Kumar has done.

She was born in Royal Oak, MI, received her undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan, and graduated from the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law. She spent a decade in private practice before being appointed by Governor Jennifer Granholm to the Oakland County Sixth Circuit Court in 2007.

She has since been elected by Michigan voters, and since January 2018, Judge Kumar has served as the chief

judge of the circuit court. During her time as a judge, Judge Kumar has presided over more than 10,500 cases, and she has served as presiding judge of the Adult Treatment Court, which allows people to avoid jail time by getting mental health treatment, help with employment and education, which is so important. During her nomination hearing, Judge Kumar talked about the amazing transformation she sees in people and how grateful they are for the opportunity to contribute to society.

She has also served as the chairperson of the Oakland County Criminal Assignment Committee, a member of the Michigan State Bar professionalism committee, and a member of the Executive Committee of the Michigan Judges Association.

If confirmed, Judge Kumar would be the first Federal judge of South Asian descent in Michigan, and there is no doubt that her father and her home State of Michigan will be very, very proud. I enthusiastically support this nomination and hope that my colleagues will do the same.

NOMINATION OF JANE M. BECKERING

Mr. President, secondly, I rise also to give strong support as well for the nomination of Judge Jane Beckering to be U.S. district court judge for the Western District of Michigan. I can think of few people more qualified or more respected and more ready to serve the people of Michigan in this new role.

Jane Beckering is a native of West Michigan. She attended the University of Michigan and then the University of Wisconsin in order to carry on her family's legacy. Both her father and her grandfather were trial lawyers—two of the world's finest, according to Judge Beckering. They believe that America's system of justice was the best in the world, and they taught Judge Beckering that civility, integrity, and respect for others are the trademarks of the legal profession.

Judge Beckering has spent her career upholding these ideals. During her more than three decades of legal experience, she has presided over and issued an opinion on more than 4,000 cases. Since 2007, she has served as a judge on the Michigan Court of Appeals and is the chief judge pro tempore of the court. She was first appointed to the court by then-Governor Jennifer Granholm and later elected by the people of Michigan.

Before that, Judge Beckering was a trial attorney in Grand Rapids, and she has been actively involved in the West Michigan legal community. She has a broad range of experience in a wide range of cases, including multi-State commercial litigation, product liability, personal injury, and wrongful death cases.

For all of these reasons, Judge Beckering was strongly supported by the Western District Judicial Nominations Advisory Committee. She was unanimously rated "well qualified" by

the American Bar Association, and she received bipartisan support in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

She is just the type of person we need in the Federal judiciary, and I am eager for her to begin her new role. I wholeheartedly support this nomination and encourage my colleagues to do the same.

Both Judge Kumar and Judge Beckering are extremely qualified and competent judicial nominations that are in front of us today, and I hope everyone will be supporting them as strongly as I am. And I know people in Michigan are very, very proud of both of them.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

VOTE ON GAWANDE NOMINATION

All postcloture time has expired. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Gawande nomination?

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. OSSOFF), the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES), the Senator from Iowa (Ms. ERNST), the Senator from Nebraska (Mrs. FISCHER), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL), the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), and the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SHELBY).

The result was announced—yeas 48, nays 31, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 507 Ex.]

YEAS—48

Baldwin	Booker	Carper
Barrasso	Brown	Casey
Bennet	Cantwell	Collins
Blumenthal	Cardin	Coons

Cortez Masto	Leahy	Schatz
Duckworth	Lujan	Schumer
Durbin	Manchin	Shaheen
Gillibrand	Markey	Sinema
Hassan	Menendez	Smith
Heinrich	Merkley	Stabenow
Hickenlooper	Murkowski	Tester
Hirono	Murphy	Van Hollen
Kaine	Murray	Warnock
Kelly	Padilla	Warren
King	Reed	Whitehouse
Klobuchar	Rosen	Wyden

NAYS—31

Blackburn	Hagerty	Scott (FL)
Blunt	Hawley	Scott (SC)
Boozman	Hoeven	Sullivan
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Thune
Cassidy	Kennedy	Tillis
Cornyn	Lankford	Toomey
Cotton	Lee	Tuberville
Crapo	Marshall	Wicker
Cruz	Romney	Young
Graham	Rubio	
Grassley	Sasse	

NOT VOTING—21

Burr	Inhofe	Peters
Capito	Johnson	Portman
Cramer	Lummis	Risch
Daines	McConnell	Rounds
Ernst	Moran	Sanders
Feinstein	Osoff	Shelby
Fischer	Paul	Warner

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KELLY). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 577, Linda Lopez, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of California.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Catherine Cortez Masto, Sheldon Whitehouse, Debbie Stabenow, Jack Reed, Alex Padilla, Tammy Baldwin, Benjamin L. Cardin, Christopher A. Coons, Christopher Murphy, Jeff Merkley, Patty Murray, Ron Wyden, Tina Smith, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Cory A. Booker, Richard Blumenthal, Martin Heinrich.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Linda Lopez, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of California, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. OSSOFF), the Senator from Michigan

(Mr. PETERS), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES), the Senator from Iowa (Ms. ERNST), the Senator from Nebraska (Mrs. FISCHER), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL), the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), and the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SHELBY).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 47, nays 30, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 508 Ex.]

YEAS—47

Baldwin	Heinrich	Padilla
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Reed
Blumenthal	Hirono	Rosen
Booker	Kaine	Schatz
Brown	Kelly	Schumer
Cantwell	King	Shaheen
Cardin	Klobuchar	Sinema
Carper	Leahy	Smith
Casey	Lujan	Stabenow
Collins	Manchin	Tester
Coons	Markey	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Warnock
Duckworth	Merkley	Warren
Durbin	Murkowski	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Murphy	Wyden
Hassan	Murray	

NAYS—30

Barrasso	Hagerty	Sasse
Blackburn	Hawley	Scott (FL)
Blunt	Hoeven	Scott (SC)
Boozman	Hyde-Smith	Sullivan
Braun	Kennedy	Thune
Cassidy	Lankford	Tillis
Cornyn	Lee	Toomey
Crapo	Marshall	Tuberville
Cruz	Romney	Wicker
Grassley	Rubio	Young

NOT VOTING—23

Burr	Graham	Peters
Capito	Inhofe	Portman
Cotton	Johnson	Risch
Cramer	Lummis	Rounds
Daines	McConnell	Sanders
Ernst	Moran	Shelby
Feinstein	Osoff	Warner
Fischer	Paul	

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). The yeas are 47, the nays are 30.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Linda Lopez, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of California.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.